

# Jerry Rawlings

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**Jerry John Rawlings** (born 22 June 1947)<sup>[3]</sup> is a former head of state and president of Ghana. Rawlings initially came to power in Ghana as a flight lieutenant of the Ghana Air Force following a coup d'état in 1979 and, after initially handing power over to a civilian government, took back control of the country on 31 December 1981 as the Chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council. In 1992 Rawlings resigned from the Armed Forces, founded the National Democratic Congress and became the first president of the Fourth Republic. He was re-elected in 1996 for a further four years.<sup>[4]</sup> He currently serves as the African Union envoy to Somalia.

Rawlings attempted a coup d'état on 15 May 1979, leading a group of military personnel in a coup attempt on General Fred Akuffo which resulted in him being arrested, imprisoned and facing a death sentence. However, a speech he gave during his trial resonated with a large section of the public that rose up in his defence. Consequently, on 4 June, soldiers sympathetic to his motivations broke him out of jail, and he led a revolt of both the military and civilians which overthrew General Akuffo and the Supreme Military Council, effectively leaving him in charge.<sup>[4]</sup> Rawlings and the soldiers around him formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and conducted what it termed "a housecleaning exercise", whose aim was to purge Ghanaian society of all the corruption and social injustices that they perceived to be at the root of their coup d'état.<sup>[3]</sup>

The AFRC organized an election and it was won by Hilla Limann of the People's National Party (PNP). On 31 December 1981 Rawlings and together with some soldiers and civilians took advantage of new year festivities organized by Limann and overthrew the Limann government, citing economic mismanagement. Rawlings then installed the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) with himself as the Chairman.

## Jerry John Rawlings



Jerry John Rawlings

### President of Ghana

(1st President of the 4th Republic)

#### In office

7 January 1993 – 7 January 2001

**Vice President** Kow Nkensen Arkaah (1993–1997)

John Atta Mills (1997–2001)

**Succeeded by** John Agyekum Kufuor

### 10th Head of state of Ghana

#### In office

31 December 1981 – 7 January 1993

**Vice President** None

**Preceded by** Dr. Hilla Limann

**Succeeded by** Jerry John Rawlings

### 8th Head of state of Ghana

#### In office

4 June 1979 – 24 September 1979

**Preceded by** General Fred Akuffo

**Succeeded by** Dr. Hilla Limann

### Personal details

**Born** 22 June 1947  
Accra, Gold Coast

In 1992, Rawlings retired from the military and set up the National Democratic Congress (NDC),<sup>[4]</sup> He legalized political parties and organized Presidential and Parliamentary elections, in response to demands for a more democratic process concerning the governing of the country. Rawlings and his party won with 58.3 percent of the vote, with outside observers declaring the voting to be "free and fair".<sup>[3]</sup> In 1996, Rawlings went on to win a second term as President.

After two terms in office, barred by his constitution from standing in any election, Rawlings endorsed his vice-president John Atta Mills as presidential candidate in 2000.

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<b>Political party</b>	military – AFRC (1979) <div>military – PNDC (1981–1993)</div> Multi-Party Democracy – NDC (1992–2011)
<b>Spouse(s)</b>	Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings
<b>Children</b>	4
<b>Profession</b>	Fighter Pilot
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholicism
<b>Awards</b>	UDS Honorary Award <sup>[1]</sup> <div>Global Champion for People’s Freedom<sup>[2]</sup></div>
<b>Website</b>	presidentrawlings.com <div>(http://presidentrawlings.com)</div>
<b>Military service</b>	
<b>Allegiance</b>	<span><span></span></span> Ghana
<b>Service/branch</b>	Ghana Air Force
<b>Years of service</b>	1967–1992
<b>Rank</b>	Flight Lieutenant

## Background

Jerry John Rawlings was born in Accra, Gold Coast, on 22 June 1947, to Victoria Agbotui (born 9 September 1919 in Dzelukope near Keta in what is now the Volta Region of Ghana), and James Ramsey John, a Scottish chemist born in 1907 in Castle Douglas in South-West Scotland. Rawlings attended Achimota School.

Rawlings is married to Nana Konadu Agyeman. He has three daughters: Ezanetor Rawlings, Yaa Asantewaa Rawlings, Amina Rawlings; and one son, Kimathi Rawlings.

## Military career

In March 1968, Jerry John Rawlings traveled to Sekondi-Takoradi in Ghana to study as a pilot officer. He graduated in January 1969, and was commissioned a pilot officer, winning the coveted "Speed Bird Trophy" as the best cadet in flying and airmanship. He earned the rank of flight lieutenant in April 1978.

In May 1979, Rawlings, together with six other soldiers were arrested, by the Ghanaian Military for a mutiny labelled as a coup attempt (because the military were in power at the time) on the government of General Fred Akuffo, and Rawlings appeared before a General Court Martial, charged with leading a squad of soldiers on 15 May 1979.

While awaiting his execution, Rawlings was sprung from custody on 4 June 1979 by a group of soldiers. He led the insurgent that ousted the Supreme Military Council from office with Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). On the night of 4 June, lives were lost in both the forces fighting against the military government and those fighting on the side of the insurgency. As one of his first acts in power, Rawlings signed the orders for the execution of a former military president of Ghana who was later executed: Ignatius Kutu Acheampong, and Air Vice-Marshal Yaw Boakye. Four other generals—Kotei, Joy Amedume, Roger Felli, and Utuka—were also put to death. Rawlings has never denied responsibility for this.

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), under the Military Marshal of Rawlings, carried out, what Rawlings described as a much wider "house-cleaning exercise". Meanwhile, following a programme already set in motion before the 4 June insurgency. On 24 September 1979, the AFRC military allowed the governing of the People's National Party (PNP) under Hilla Limann.

Limann's administration was cut short on 31 December 1981, when Rawlings deposed him in another coup. The Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), composed of both civilian and soldiers, was established with Rawlings as the Chairman. The PNDC, led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings began the process of what Rawlings said to be a decentralisation.

## Atrocities

Immediately following the overthrow of the Gen. Akufo government, Rawlings and his men embarked on what was termed "house-cleaning". They immediately tried and executed General Akufo, Gen. I. K.Acheampong, and Gen. Afrifa, all former heads of state, who had participated in earlier treasonable coups against former Presidents like Nkrumah. Air Vice Marshall Yaw Boakye, Gneral Utuka, Amedume, Feli and Kotei were also executed for their roles in undermining the image of the military through corrupt acts.

The killings of the Supreme Court justices (Cecilia Koranteng Addo, Frederick Sarkodie, and Kwadjo Agyei Agyepong), military officers Major Sam Acquah and Major Dasana Nantogmah and the killings and disappearance of over 300<sup>[5]</sup> other Ghanaians occurred at this time in Ghana's history.

## Post-military

In Jerry John Rawlings' first official speech subsequent to the removal of Hilla Limann, he announced the creation of the National Commission on Democracy (NCD), which began decentralisation and dissemination. Opposition to the PNDC, with pressure from the United States through the CIA began demanding a return to multi-party democracy, although a referendum showed mixed feelings on this. The National Commission on Democracy was put into high gear to begin the process to return to multi-party

elections. National Commission for Democracy (NCD) was empowered to hold debates and formulate some suggestions for a transition to multi-party democracy. Opposition groups complained that the NCD was too closely associated with the PNDC, the commission continued its work through 1991. In March of that year the NCD released a report recommending the election of an executive president, the establishment of a national assembly, and the creation of a prime minister post. The PNDC accepted the report, and the following year it was approved in a referendum. Political parties were legalised by Rawlings—with the provision that none could use names that had been used before—and a timetable was set for presidential and parliamentary elections.

When presidential elections were held in 1992, Rawlings stood as the candidate for the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the successor party to the PNDC. Although his opponents were given access to television and newspaper coverage, and limits to the freedom of the press had been slightly lifted, no single candidate could match him. Election returns on 3 November 1992 revealed that Rawlings had won 58.3 percent of the vote, for a landslide victory.<sup>[6]</sup>

Almost immediately, the opposition parties claimed that the presidential election was not fair, and that widespread abuses had occurred. The leaders encouraged their followers to boycott subsequent Ghana parliamentary and presidential elections, with the result that NDC officials won 189 of 200 seats in the parliament. Answering questions about polling place irregularities, he said he will initiate a new voter registration program.

Rawlings and the NDC again held onto the Ghana parliament in 1992 and 1996.

Per his constitutional mandate, Rawlings' term of office ended in 2001; he retired in 2001, Rawlings was succeeded by John Agyekum Kufuor, his main rival and opponent in 1996.

Kufuor succeeded in defeating Rawlings's vice-president John Atta Mills in 2000. In 2004, Mills conceded to Kufuor and Kufuor ran for another four years.

## Post Presidency

In October 2010, Jerry John Rawlings was named African Union Envoy to Somalia.<sup>[7]</sup>

He has given lectures in universities, including at the Oxford University. Jerry John Rawlings has continued his heavy support for his NDC and criticism of his former vice-president, John Atta Mills.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Awards and honours

- October 2013: Honorary degree Doctorate of Letters from the University for Development Studies. This was in recognition of his contribution to the establishment of the University. In 1993 he used his US\$50,000 Hunger Project cash prize in as seed money to sponsor the establishment of the state-owned university, the first of its kind in the three Northern Regions.<sup>[1]</sup>
- October 2013: **Global Champion for People's Freedom** by the Mkiva Humanitarian Foundation.<sup>[2]</sup>

## References

1. University for Development Studies News. "Acceptance Speech by H. E. Jerry John Rawlings" (PDF). *Leadership*

*for Sustainable Development and Democratic Transition in Ghana*. Retrieved 27 October 2013.

2. Peace FM Online (27 October 2013). "Rawlings Receives Another Award In South Africa And Says The World Is Engulfed In Hypocrisy". *Office of Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings/Former President of the Republic of Ghana*.
3. "FLT LT JERRY JOHN RAWLINGS Former President of The Republic of Ghana". Retrieved 2013-01-03.
4. "Flt.-Lt. (Rtd) Jerry John Rawlings Profile:". Retrieved 2013-01-03.
5. Jerry Rawlings: A Threat to Ghana's Democracy? (<http://www.africanexecutive.com/modules/magazine/articles.php?article=5031>). *The African Executive*.
6. National Democratic Institute (<http://www.ndi.org/ghana>)
7. Rawlings named AU envoy to Somalia (<http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Rawlings-named-AU-envoy-to-Somalia-20101009>). *news24.com*.

## External links

- Flight Lieutenant Jeremiah John Rawlings ([http://www.ghana-pedia.org/org/index.php?option=com\\_directory&listing=\(Flt-Lt\)%20Jeremiah%20J.%20Rawlings&page=viewListing&lid=120&Itemid=36](http://www.ghana-pedia.org/org/index.php?option=com_directory&listing=(Flt-Lt)%20Jeremiah%20J.%20Rawlings&page=viewListing&lid=120&Itemid=36))
- Official Website (<http://www.presidentrawlings.com/>)
- Biography of Jerry J. Rawlings at Encyclopaedia Britannica (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/492337/Jerry-J-Rawlings>)

Political offices		
Preceded by <b>Fred Akuffo</b>	<b>Head of state of Ghana</b> 1979	Succeeded by <b>Hilla Limann</b>
Preceded by <b>Hilla Limann</b>	<b>Head of state of Ghana</b> 1981–1993	Succeeded by <i>Constitutional Rule</i>
Preceded by <i>Constitutional rule re-established in Ghana</i>	<b>President of Ghana</b> 1993 – 2001	Succeeded by <b>John Kufuor</b>
Preceded by <b>Nicéphore Soglo</b>	<b>Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States</b> 1994 – 1996	Succeeded by <b>Sani Abacha</b>
Military offices		
Preceded by <b>Joseph Nunoo-Mensah</b>	<b>Chief of the Defence Staff</b> November 1982 — August 1983	Succeeded by <b>Arnold Quainoo</b>
Party political offices		
<b>New title</b>	<b>National Democratic Congress presidential candidate</b> 1992, 1996	Succeeded by <b>John Atta Mills</b>

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## | Chiefs of the Defence Staff of Ghana

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